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News Release ~ Communiqué

MacKenzie-Papineau Battalion recognized as being of national and historic significance

TORONTO, June 4, 1995 - The MacKenzie-Papineau Battalion was officially recognized today as being of national historic significance with the unveiling of a Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada plaque.

Representatives of the federal and Ontario governments participated in a special ceremony at Queen's Park commemorating the MacKenzie-Papineau Battalion as a significant event in Canadian history. Albina Guarnieri, MP for Mississauga East, and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, the Honourable Michel Dupuy, was joined this morning by the Honourable David Warner, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and José Antonio Zorrilla, Consul-General of Spain.

In her address, Ms. Guarnieri affirmed that the "recognition of this heroic group of Canadians not only appoints them to their rightful place in Canadian history, but is also a credit to the perseverance of the family and friends of the MacKenzie-Papineau Battalion, who have long endeavoured to achieve this end." She added that, "every successful effort to recognize segments of our country's history not only increases our knowledge and our cultural and historical wealth, but also contributes in a very tangible fashion to reinforcing our identity as Canadians."

The MacKenzie-Papineau Battalion is the name given to the group of Canadians who fought for the Republican government in the Spanish Civil War. The group was formed in Spain in 1937 as a unit of the XVth International Brigade. Although already fighting against the rise of fascism in Spain, the naming of the battalion after two prominent figures in national history, helped this relatively large group of Canadians gain recognition, support and respect for their efforts. More importantly, their victories in a series of battles called "The Retreats" in north-east Spain facilitated the safe conduit for the eventual flight of hundreds of thousands of refugees.

The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada recommends to the Minister of Canadian Heritage those individuals, places and structures it deems of national historic significance.

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